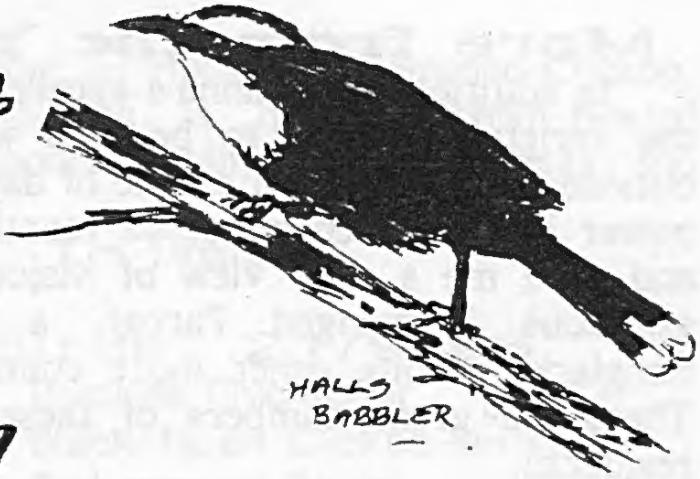


# Castlemaine Naturalist



October 1996

Vol. 20.9 #227

## The Naturalists' Perfect Retreat

Yowah is a small, isolated opal mining community in south-west Queensland on the boundary between two large outback stations. Rambles through the Scrub always turned up plenty of interesting birds attracted by the flowering eremophilas, cassias, wattles and saltbush. The four babblers are all found around town and I believe the elusive Hall's Babbler was first identified here. Of the 141 birds listed in the area I saw the following -

Emu	Brown Songlark
White-faced heron	Splendid Fairy-wren
Black Kite	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill
Crested Pigeon	Southern Whiteface
Galah	Brown Treecreeper
Little Corella	Spiney-cheeked Honeyeater
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	Striped Honeyeater
Red-winged Parrot	Noisy Friarbird
Australian Ringneck	Little Friarbird
Mulga Parrot	Yellow-throated Miner
Blue Bonnet	Singing Honeyeater
Bourke's Parrot	Grey-headed Honeyeater
Southern Boobook (h)	White-plumed Honeyeater
Red-backed Kingfisher	Black Honeyeater
Welcome Swallow	Crimson Chat
White-winged Triller	Mistletoebird
Red-capped Robin	Striated Pardalote
Hooded Robin	Red-browed Pardalote
Jacky Winter	Zebra Finch
Rufous Whistler	Spotted Bowerbird
Grey Shrike-thrush	White-winged Chough
Crested Bellbird	Apostlebird
Restless Flycatcher	Magpielark
Willie Wagtail	Black-faced Woodswallow
Grey-crowned Babbler	Grey Butcherbird
White-browed Babbler	Magpie
Chestnut-crowned Babbler	Australian Raven
	Susanna Starr

## **More from the Yowah Opal Fields**

In addition to Susanna's excellent report I would like to comment on the variety of birds to be seen while I was relaxing in the sunshine outside our cabin for a couple of days while recovering from a cold. The power line installed about 12 months ago seems to be a popular perch, and gave me a clear view of Major Mitchell Cockatoos, Bluebonnets, a gorgeous Redwinged Parrot, a Redbacked Kingfisher and Brown Songlarks among other more common types such as Crested Pigeons. There are great numbers of these, fed every morning by one of the residents.

Groups of Apostlebirds, sometimes 30 - 60, checked the rubbish bins every day before they were emptied at 9.30am. They were noisy and quarrelsome, and quite objectionable - until later, when you glimpsed them snuggling affectionately together on branches.

A male Mistletoebird, and occasionally his mate, visited the elegant Leopardwood tree near our door several times daily, and a Grey Butcherbird terrorised the numerous White-plumed Honeyeaters intent on nesting in the Mulga trees at the rear. A Spotted Bowerbird with raucous voice was not popular with the other birds, either. Black Kites patrolled the settlement each day, as did a pair of Brown Falcons, and flocks of Galahs and Little Corellas were always about. Across the road by the shower and toilet block a pair of Willie Wagtails proclaimed their territory, and a Grey Shrike-thrush appeared now and then.

Just around the corner of the cabin is the reason for such prolific birdlife in such an arid region - an artesian bore which was sunk in 1911 and delivers about 560,000 litres of water a day at a temperature of 55°C, and flows down 25 km of drain to supply water for Yowah and Moolya station (of which Yowah is a part). There are three concrete "boxes" open to the sky which serve as public bath houses, and it was very pleasant to lie immersed to the chin in soft, warm, artesian bore water while Blue bonnets and Honeyeaters flitted about in the tall old mulga trees above.

At night, because there is no lighting, the brilliance of the starry sky and the chorus of frogs were an added attraction.

Shirley Parnaby.

## **In Search of the Swift Parrot**

On the weekends of 15th and 21st September Maureen and I spent many enjoyable hours in the Muckleford forest on a quest to find the elusive Swift Parrots, with success on the 15th but there was no sign of them at all on the 21st and 22nd. In the process we came up with 84 different birds in this area and around Joyces creek on Cairn Curran Res.

Some of the more interesting included - Horsefields Bronze-Cuckoo, Pallid Cuckoo, Rufous Whistler (Spring is here!), Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-winged Triller, Hooded Robin, Diamond Firetail, and a pair of Peregrine Falcons.

Ken Dredge.

### Bells Swamp Birds, 21/9/96

Musk Duck	Restless Flycatcher
Shoveller	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Black Duck	Red-rumped Parrot
Mountain Duck	Eastern Rosella
Hardhead	Welcome Swallow
Coot	Tree Martin
Dusky Moorhen	Magpie
Hoary-headed Grebe	Australian Raven
Black Swan	Little Raven
Spoonbill	Mudlark
White-necked Heron	Galah
Brown Falcon	Masked Lapwing
Swamp Harrier	Little Pied Cormorant
Blue Wren	Greater Black Cormorant
Fuscous Honeyeater	

Penny Garnett

### Birds at 61 Hunter St., September

Two pairs of Striated Pardelotes are interested in the special nest boxes erected two years ago, but after two weeks of daily inspection they are apparently still undecided.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Rosellas who nested in the parrot box for the last two seasons have not been about for some weeks, the Crimson pair hang around and keep checking it out, but haven't moved in as yet.

The Rufous Whistlers are back and in great form vocally, as are the Grey Shrike-thrush, the male Blackbird and the Spinebills on the grevillea flowers. Kookaburras add to the birdsong each morning and evening. For the rest we have a Magpie, Mistletoebirds, Goldfinches, Silvereyes, Red Wattlebirds and a pair of Superb Blue Wrens feeding and gathering nesting material in our garden area. Galahs and ravens patrol the nearby bush, and an Oriole has also been heard, but not seen, in the Kalimna bush behind our property.

Shirley Parnaby.

# CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB PUBLICATIONS UPDATE

These booklets are still in print

Mineral Springs Tour	Mt Alexander Tour
Norwood Hill Walk	Lawn and Garden Weeds
Native Plants for Castlemaine Gardens	Fryerstown Tour
Castlemaine Plants for Castlemaine Gardens	

A very few Geology and Street Tree booklets are on hand. The Castlemaine Bird List and Castlemaine Plant List are printed on demand.

Some booklets are now out of print. These include

Wattles of the Castlemaine District	Eucalypts of the Castlemaine District
Orchids of the Castlemaine District	Kalimna Walk
Botanic Gardens Plant List	Wildflowers of the Castlemaine Goldfields

These out-of-print booklets will not be reprinted as booklets.

**Leaflets.** The material in booklets will be re-issued in leaflet form, i.e. as an A4 page folded in three. Leaflets will have a price of 25c. Those available to date are:

Acacias 1 and Acacias 2. These are revised versions of Wattles of the Castlemaine District. Acacias 1 covers the fern-leaved acacias and the needle-leaved acacias. Acacias 2 covers the flat-leaved acacias.

Kalimna Walk. A revised version of the booklet.

Muckleford Native Plant List. A new publication. An alphabetical list of plants native to Muckleford and Smith's Reef Forests.

Mt Alexander Shire Bird List A list of birds recorded by the Club in the Shire, with brief notes on abundance and habitat.

Some leaflets will be free. Free leaflets are

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club. A revised version of our yellow information sheet.

Broom - a pest plant. Why Broom should not be planted into gardens.

These free leaflets are available for distribution by Club members conducting Land Care days, wildflower exhibitions or the like.

**Surplus Booklets.** The Club holds large stocks of Castlemaine Plants for Castlemaine Gardens, Native Plants for Castlemaine Gardens, and Lawn and Garden Weeds. These booklets are also available to members for distribution at field days and shows etc.

**New Booklets.** The Club has not yet produced information about mammals, reptiles, amphibians, or invertebrates native to our district. We need a volunteer to undertake this activity.

## PLANT IDENTIFICATION

### Slender Westringia *Westringia eremicola*

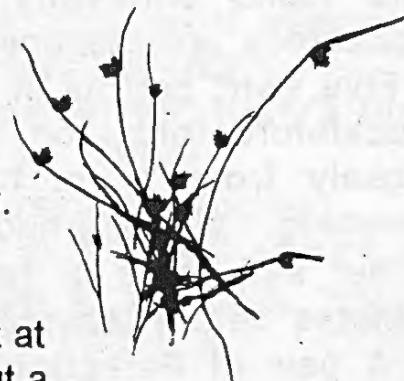
A small shrub with blue to white tube-like flowers was seen growing near the entrance to Lockwood Forest on the Club's recent excursion to that locality. It was a species that I do not recall seeing before, but it was obviously a member of the mint family. Examination of the calyx (the green part under the petals) showed that it had five pointed lobes. This showed that the plant was a *Westringia*. *Prostantheras* differ in that the calyx is two-lipped.

The leaves were in whorls of three, each leaf was about a millimetre wide and rough, and the branches hairy. The description fits that of the Slender Westringia. It is a slender shrub of the Mallee, North-east and far eastern Victoria, and is a new species for the Club's plant list.



### Club Rush *Isolepis marginata*.

"This small grass-like plant is abundant in my garden. I want to grow only natives. Is it native or introduced?"



The plant is Club Rush. It is a member of the sedge family. The flowers are in clusters at the end of the culms. The clusters appear to be at the edge of the culm, but what appears to be the upper part of the culm is actually a bract at the base of the flowers. The flowers do not have petals, but a series of bracts arranged spirally.

It is not clear as to whether or not it is native or introduced.

Flora of South Australia vol 4 - native.

Ross-A census of the vascular plants of Victoria - introduced.

Flora of Victoria vol 2 - "It is not clear whether this species is native or introduced; however its occurrence in this State in often remote and undisturbed areas would suggest that it is AN indigenous rather than introduced species."

Flora of NSW vol 4 - introduced.



### Jersey Cudweed *Pseudognaphalium luteoalbum*..

This plant is from the same source as the Club Rush. Is it a native?

Jersey Cudweed is widespread, and often is to be found growing in weedy places. It has small yellowish daisy-flowers. The bracts at the base of the flowers are translucent, like fine tissue-paper.

Jersey Cudweed is a cosmopolitan species, and so is a world-wide species. So keep it in your garden.

EP.

## Observations

- \* A dozen Shovellers seen on Bells Swamp mid-September. Also on Red Gum Swamp on the Pyrenees Highway, just west of Joyces Creek. E.P.
- \* Orioles are abundant this year. Heard throughout the bushland. M.O., M.D.
- \* Musk Lorrikeets feeding on Poplar flowers in Newstead. E.P.
- \* A very large flock of Brown-headed Honeyeaters on blossom trees in the garden at little Bendigo. C.M.
- \* Eastern Rosellas, Crimson Rosellas and Galahs are all living in the same area for the first time on the hill near the old Gaol. M.W.
- \* Goldfinches seen near the Harcourt swimming pool. B.E.
- \* There has been no sign of the Southern Boobooks on their usual perch for several weeks now - since mid-August in fact. The possums' nest has also disappeared, and the ground at the foot of the tree is strewn with the nipped off sprigs of new growth. The foliage is thin and looks unhealthy. I suspect an invasion of Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos are responsible for the havoc. S.P.
- \* Five swift parrots in flowering Grey Box on Red, White and Blue track, Muckleford forest on 15/9/96. Two birds in particular were observed closely from 1 pm to 1.30pm in the same group of trees, mainly perching. We returned to the same spot at 3.30pm and the birds were either still there or had returned. We observed them for another 10 minutes before leaving them to it. M.&K.D.
- \* A pair of Peregrine Falcons soaring over Cairn Curran reservoir at Joyces Creek (Grid D) M. & K.D.
- \* No sign of the bustards or the like at Moolort M. & K.D. though M.C. is emphatic that the bird he saw was a bustard.
- \* The White-faced Herons have nested on the Common at Chewton again this year, and have raised two young. The first one taken for a flying lesson followed the parent across the Common to the trees at the other side, but, because the parent bird was too high, the youngster was being buffeted by the wind and tiring. They circled and tried again lower down, but Junior misjudged its landing and crash-landed in a garden on the other side of the Common. L.R.
- \* W.W.III continues at Chewton, with none of the pairs, Ravens, Kookaburras or Wood Ducks, showing any sign of being able to settle down to raising a family. L.R.
- \* A Grey Shrike-thrush is nesting in a small bush near a shed in the yard in Fryers Road, only about a metre from the ground. At the end of September she had laid 3 speckled eggs. L.R.
- \* An Oyster Catcher seen nesting on the swamp at Port Fairy opposite the small island at the mouth of the river. L.R.
- \* The pied Blackbird first seen by M.W. near the creek in Gingell St. about a year ago, and was later seen in Doveton St., was found by dead by E.P. in his garden.

**V.F.N.C.A. CAMPOUT**  
AT HOWMAN'S GAP, FRI. 7 - MON. 8 MARCH 1997  
(or from Thurs Mar 6 as an option)

<u>Venue</u>	Howman's Gap Alpine Centre, between Mt Beauty and Fall's Creek.
<u>Catering</u>	All meals provided from supper on Friday to lunch Monday. Tea and coffee facilities available. For those opting for extra day, dinner Thursday and all meals provided on Friday.
<u>Cost</u>	Anticipated costs are:- 7 - 10 Mar, \$ 100-00 6 - 10 Mar \$ 135-00
<u>Accommodation</u>	Bunk style, mainly for 4 - 6. Blankets and pillows are provided. Bring bed linen and towels.
<u>Environment</u>	Howmans Gap is located on Bogong High Plains 10 km before Falls Creek.
<u>Proposed Excursions</u>	Include geological, botanical and ornithological interests McKay Power Station; walks to Ropers Lookout, Wallaces Hut, Rocky Knobs, McNamaras Hut, Kelly's Hut, Mount Cope and Pretty Valley Circuit. Other suggestions and offers to lead excursions welcome.
<u>Bookings</u>	Now being accepted - booking fee of \$20 will secure a place. Further info will be sent later to the Club.
<u>Payments</u>	Cheques should be made payable to V.F.N.C.A. Send to Geoff Travers, Treasurer, V.F.N.C.A. 23/2 Old Stud Rd. Wantirna South. 3152.
<u>Enquiries &amp; Suggestions</u>	Please send all direct enquiries, suggestions and offers to - Jane Cleary 20 Coynes Rd., Epsom. 3551 Ph (054) 430 521 or - Bev Leeson 76 Lawson St., Bendigo. 3550. Ph (054) 433 916

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**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS** Jaqui and John Turnbull of Barkers Creek, and Ken and Marjory Cross of Woodend.

**A STREAM CARE/REPAIR FIELD DAY SEMINAR IS TO BE HELD ON SAT NOV 2.** Starts with lectures at Campbells Creek Community Centre at 9.15am. After lunch - a bus tour with experts to local problem sites, inc. Muckleford Gorge. P.M. tea at Vaughan Springs. Concludes at 4.30pm. Cost: \$10 for the full day (inc. A.M. and P.M. tea and lunch) (\$5 for students)

Booking slips available at the meeting.

Further details - Graeme (Tue - Thur) 75 2088 or David 73 4492

## C. F. N. C. PROGRAMME

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

General Meetings are held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street.

Fri Oct 11 Raising Box/Ironbark Awareness. Charlie Sherwin, Vic. Nat Parks Ass'n. 8.00pm Cont. Ed.

Sat, Sun Oct 12 & 13 Alan Reid's property, Burns Road, Yea. See note inside.

Fri - Sun Oct 18 - 20 VFNCA campout at Myaring reserve. Details in August newsletter.

Sat Nov 2 Festival Walk, Kalimna. 10am. See Festival brochure for details.

[Sat Nov 2 Stream care/repair Field Day Seminar. See inside for details]

Sat Nov 9 Dead Horse Gully Walk. 1.30pm. See Festival Brochure for details.

Fri Nov 15\* Catchment and Land Protection Strategies for our Region. Shawn Butters, speaker. 8pm Cont Ed.

\* Note change of date due to Castlemaine Festival.

Fri Dec 13. Members and Visitors Night. 8pm Cont. Ed.

Sat Dec. 14. Discovery walk from Shire boundary to Baringup along Carisbrook/Baringup road, (approx. 5-6km). Leave 27 Doveton St. at 10 am. Take lunch, drinks, etc., and wear a shady hat, boots, thick pants, gaiters or such. Leader E. Perkins.

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Committee: C. Morris (Pres.), G. Broadway (V.P.), M. Willis (Interim Sec.), B. Envall (Treas.), K. Turner, R. Mills (P.O. & N/L Ed.), E. Perkins, M. Oliver, B. Maund, J. Hewetson, M. Dredge.

### Meetings:-

General - Second Friday every month (except Jan) at Continuing Education, Templeton St. at 8 pm.

Business - Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. All Members are invited to attend.

### Subscriptions - 1996

Ordinary Membership: single \$14 Family \$20

Pensioner/Student: Single \$10 Family \$16.

Supporting \$25

Newsletter posted: Membership + \$6

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Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.  
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.